(a) whether any proposal is under Government's consideration to approach Government of Nepal to find out ways and means for taming the rivers originating from that country and flowing to the States of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar which cause floods year after year; and

(b) if so, the details thereof, and by when a final decision is likely to be taken thereon?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRI JAI PRAKASH NARAYAN YADAV): (a) and (b) Pancheshwar Multipurpose Project on river Sharda (Mahakali in Nepal), Saptakosi High Dam Project on river Kosi and Naumure Multipurpose Project on river West Rabti, are under discussion in India-Nepal Joint Committee on Water Resources (JCWR) headed by Secretaries (Water Resources) of both the countries. The 3rd meeting of JCWR has been held recently from 29.9.08 to 1.10.08 at Kathmandu. During the meeting, JCWR decided to set up a Pancheswar Development Authority (PDA) at the earliest in accordance with the Mahakali Treaty for the development, execution and operation of the Pancheswar Multipurpose Project. Further, the JCWR decided to extend the tenure of Joint Project Office (JPO) established for the preparation of Detailed Project Report (DPR) of Sapta Kosi High Dam Multipurpose Project including sun Kosi Storage-cum-Diversion Scheme up to December, 2009 for expeditious completion of DPR. India side also agreed to undertake pre-feasibility study of Naumure Multipurpose Project.

A three tier mechanism consisting of Joint Ministerial Commission on Water Resources (JMCWR) to be co-chaired by Ministers of Water Resources of India and Nepal, the existing Joint Committee on Water Resources (JCWR) at the level of Secretaries of Water Resources of India and Nepal and Joint Standing Technical Committee (JSTC) to coordinate all existing Committees and Sub-committees, has been agreed in the 3rd meeting of JCWR to expedite the implementation of the above said projects in Nepal.

These high dam projects, on implementation, would provide benefits to people of India and Nepal, both, in the form of hydro-power, irrigation and flood moderation.

Big dams *vis-a-vis* floods

461. SHRI MOINUL HASSAN: Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state:

(a) how much big dams are responsible for causing floods in the country;

(b) whether Government has conducted any study about the benefits of big dams such as generating electricity and irrigation in one hand and the silting of river beds, change of river course, recurrence of floods, increase in flood prone areas and the loss of national exchequers, loss of lives of human and cattles on the other;

(c) if so, the details of comparative figures thereof; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRI JAI PRAKASH NARAYAN YADAV): (a) The big dams are helpful in mitigation of floods, especially if dedicated flood cushion is provided in the storage. The big dams are operated on the basis of specified rule curve as per Operation Manual of Reservoir which helps in flood mitigation.

(b) to (d) No such study has been conducted by the Government.

Special category to Rajasthan

†462. DR. PRABHA THAKUR: Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the condition of Rajasthan is very bad in comparison to States of special category where approximately 2/3 portion of the State is Thar desert and it has been declared drought affected area;

(b) whether Rajasthan would be given status of special category State viewing its condition; and

(c) if so, by when and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRI JAI PRAKASH NARAYAN YADAV): (a) As per information provided by Central Water Commission, 32 blocks covering an area of 31969 Sq. Km. are covered under Drought Prone Area Programme (DPAP) and 85 blocks covering an area of 198744 Sq. Km. are covered under Desert Development Programme (DDP).

(b) and (c) In order to give a boost to irrigation development in the drought prone areas of the country including in the State of Rajasthan, irrigation projects benefiting drought prone areas are also eligible for 90% of the project cost as central assistance under Accelerated Irrigation benefits Programme (AIBP) under the Ministry of Water Resources, which is at par with the special category States. Further, in normal cases, a new project could be included in AIBP only on completion of an ongoing project of the State, under AIBP. However, the projects benefiting drought prone areas could be considered for inclusion in AIBP in relaxation to one-to-one criteria.

Low level of ground water

†463. MISS ANUSUIYA UIKEY: Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that according to a study by Planning Commission that the ground water level of 29 per cent block of the country has gone down critically low;

(b) if so, the details of ground water level, and the efforts being made to arrest the going down of the water level, State-wise;

(c) the means of irrigation in the total irrigated area; and

(d) the future plans of Government for irrigation of non-irrigated areas?

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.